

## Spring 2004

## Number 52



# Pittsylvania Historical Society

## Chatham, Virginia

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Please send articles, letters, queries, etc. for publication to:

Sarah E. Mitchell, Editor  
Pittsylvania Historical Society  
P. O. Box 1148  
Chatham, VA 24531

You can also contact me at 434-432-0595, or at [sarahmitchell@vintagedesigns.com](mailto:sarahmitchell@vintagedesigns.com).

# ***The Pittsylvania Packet***

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## **President's Report**

The Society is active in acquiring grant money for the renovation of the Chatham Train Station. This project is on schedule as best as it can be at this time.

The program for the April 19<sup>th</sup> meeting has been established and should be very interesting. This program is a prelude to the up-and-coming bus tour (field trip) planned for May. More details are on page 5 of the *Packet*.

The Society is setting up new ways to order books, which should be more efficient and user-friendly. See page 17 for more details.

Continue to send your letters and interesting articles to the Society. All are appreciated.

As the theme of the Society is "Preserving Pittsylvania's Past" the museum is always accepting artifacts from the past and as a 501 (C) (3) organization such gifts are tax deductible (memberships and monetary donations are also tax deductible).

- Langhorne Jones, Jr., President

## **Red Dot Means You Need to Renew!**

If you have a red dot on your mailing label, we have not received your membership renewal. (If you have just mailed in your renewal, please disregard the dot.) Please renew in order to keep receiving the *Pittsylvania Packet*! Membership fees and information are listed on the back cover.

**Spring Meeting:  
April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

Gary Grant, local historian and author, will speak about Coles Hill and the area's architecture at the Spring meeting. The meeting will be held at the 1813 Clerk's Office on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at 7:30 PM.

Gary Grant has been involved for many years with the Danville Historical Society, the Danville Museum of Fine Arts & History, the Langhorne House Trust, and is one of the Commissioners for the Virginia Commission for the Arts. Granty was also on the State Review Board for Historic Preservation for the Virginia Department of Historic Resources; on the City of Danville's Commission of Architectural Review; and co-wrote *Victorian Danville* (on Danville's outstanding Victorian architecture).

In addition to Grant's talk, Laila Grubb Cox of Galax and J. B. Grubb of Chatham will attend the Spring quarterly meeting and present twelve letters to the Historical Society written, in 1919, by their uncle, Albany Delano Grubb, who was a World War I soldier. Mr. Grubb lived in the Hollywood community of Pittsylvania County. (The Society welcomes such gifts and invites other families to make worthwhile historical contributions that can be preserved for the educational benefit of our citizens and guests.)

**Virginia Garden Week:  
April 17<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

Homes in Chatham will be open for Virginia's Historic Garden Week on Sunday April 18<sup>th</sup>; homes and museums will be open in Danville on Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Homes, etc. in Martinsville, Lynchburg, and throughout the state will be open on various

days during the week of the 17th-25th. For more information or to buy tickets, contact the local garden clubs or see <http://www.vagardenweek.org> .

**"The Meadows" Bus Tour:  
Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

There are knowledgeable people who argue that Pittsylvania's greatest treasure is its rich heritage and history. If that is the case, then the mother lode of this treasure is the area in the eastern part of the County known as "The Meadows."

On Saturday, May 15, 2004, the Pittsylvania Historical Society will offer a historical bus tour of "The Meadows." Highlight of the trip will be a tour of the Coles Hill mansion. Col. Isaac Coles was an early settler in the Meadows. His eldest son was Walter Coles. According to Maud Clement, Walter Coles established his home on lands bequeathed him by his father and in 1825 he built this handsome brick residence. The home is still in the Coles family and the tour of the home will be hosted by Walter Coles V. Coles Hill is a private home so this is rare opportunity offered through the generosity of the Coles family.

A catered lunch will be served at the lovely rock lodge on the Chalk Level Road owned by Fuller and Judy Motley. After lunch, the tour will continue through "The Meadows." You will pass by the site of the Rachel Donelson home. Other points of interest will be homesteads of the Pannills, Mustains, and Womacks. A tour of the Womack cemetery is being looked into. The natural beauty of the area landscape is like no other in the state and the history of homes and families in the region is superb. The tour will also take you through the epicenter of the great 20th-century uranium exploration in Pittsylvania County.

Narrators for the trip will include dairy magnate and raconteur, Fuller Motley; Pittsylvania County archivist, Desmond Kendrick; and noted Pittsylvania historian, Frances Hurt.

The tour will start at 10:00 A.M. from the old Dollar General Store parking lot on Main Street (adjacent to People's Bank). The cost of the tour is \$20 per person. Tickets are on a "first come, first served" basis. Tickets will be available for Society members and guests at the Spring meeting on April 19, 2004. After this date, tickets will be available at the Danville Pittsylvania County Chamber of Commerce office in Chatham. Tour participants are reminded that this is an outdoor excursion so one should dress accordingly.

**See What's Blossoming in Chatham:  
Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004**

By Rebecca Proctor

Spring is in the air and the second annual Blossom's Garden Party will be held on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004 from 8 AM to 2 PM.

A community yard sale will begin at 8 AM. Local businesses and restaurants will be open, many of them offering Blossom's Specials. Local performers will entertain in front of the Pittsylvania County Courthouse. Walking tour brochures to guide you through our historic district will be available. Some of the historic buildings in Chatham will be open. People wishing to picnic will be welcome and Frances H. Hurt Park behind Town Hall is a beautiful setting in which to relax.

There will be a special childrens' area offering activities and crafts. Children are encouraged to

bring a decorated bicycle, wagon, tricycle, stroller, and/or to wear a costume, and participate in a parade down Main Street to the Courthouse. After the parade, dance instructors will direct volunteer children in a Maypole dance on the Courthouse lawn.

For more information contact Katherine Miller at (434) 432-8153 or Mary Lee Black at (434) 432-7721.

## **Pittsylvania County Public Library's History & Genealogy Section**

By Sarah E. Mitchell

The Chatham branch of the Pittsylvania County Public Library has a nice collection of genealogy, general history, and family history books and manuscripts in their genealogy section. Information on many Virginia counties is available, not just on Pittsylvania County.

Some census records, WPA files, and copies of Chatham's *Star-Tribune* and other papers can be found on microfilm.

The library also frequently holds computer classes on genealogy research on the Internet; call for more information.

The library is located at 24 Military Drive, Chatham, VA 24531; phone number 434-432-3271. The library is open Monday-Thursday 9AM to 8 PM; Friday 9 AM to 5 PM; and Saturday 10 AM to 12 Noon. (The library does not have the staff to be able to assist with genealogy searches, and asks that people either visit in person or hire a genealogy researcher to assist them.)

Information on the library can be found online at <http://www.pcplib.org> . A partial listing of the genealogy resources is available at <http://www.vintagedesigns.com/services/resource/pittslib.htm> .

## **Pittsylvania's Missing Confederate Cannons**

By Herman Melton

While the ragged, starving soldiers of the Confederate Army were sorrowfully stacking their arms at Appomattox on April 9, 1865, a wily Confederate Cavalry General was slipping through the Union lines with members of his command. His destination: the mountains of Tennessee and North Carolina, where he hoped to link up with Confederate General Joe Johnston. General Johnston had skilfully evaded encirclement by the Yankees, and, in fact, it was General Lee's intent to combine his forces with Johnston's when his way was blocked by Union troops at Appomattox.

The cavalryman mentioned above who was not willing to submit to the Yankees at Appomattox was General Thomas Lafayette Rosser. Long after other scattered remnants of the Confederate Army had followed Lee's command to lay down their arms, "Fighting Tom" Rosser eluded his captors for a whole month before being captured near Staunton. For this impetuous and dangerous indiscretion, he earned the enmity of Union General U. S. Grant who ordered him tried for "deserting his command after surrender." For some perplexing reason, Grant changed his mind and Rosser was paroled. It is a good guess that Rosser escaped punishment through the intervention of his counterpart, a former chum and classmate at West Point, Union General George Armstrong Custer.

The intrepid Rosser had a brilliant and enviable military career. He first distinguished himself as an artilleryman where he received several commendations. One of these was from none other than "Jeb" Stuart. It seems appropriate to point out another distinction belonging to Rosser. He can be classed as the first anti-aircraft gunner because he shot down a Union Army observation balloon early in the War.

After transferring to the cavalry, he competently led forces at Bull Run, Yorktown, Antietam, the Seven Days Battle, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg and other engagements, not to mention many battlefield successes in the Shenandoah Valley.

He was interrogated after his capture by Lt. Col. Franklin Stratton of the 11<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Cavalry. Colonel Stratton wrote the following after grilling the doughty Rosser:

*"General Rosser admitted that about nine pieces of artillery were concealed about Staunton and four pieces at Lexington – eight pieces artillery at Pittsylvania Courthouse – considerable Rebel property concealed about Charlottesville."*

The fate of Rosser's artillery pieces in Pittsylvania County remains something of a mystery. It is obvious that the guns became a burden to him immediately after he made his audacious escape through the Union lines. His newly-acquired guerilla status left him few options and none of them included carting artillery armament to Rebel units of Joe Johnston's army in Tennessee and North Carolina. The guns had to be left at points along his route. Not much is known about his activities while he was being pursued by the Union Cavalry. During his interrogation mentioned above, he indicated that

he covered a region as far north as Charlottesville and as far south as Pittsylvania County.

An account of an incident that occurred on this southern leg of his flight is extant and sheds some light on the episode. It was recounted after the war by a trooper from General John Imboden's 18<sup>th</sup> Virginia Cavalry command who wrote about encountering elements of Rosser's fugitive brigade shortly after Lee's surrender. In fact, it was from these fugitives that members of his unit first heard of the surrender. The meeting was somewhere south of Lynchburg and after spending the night in camp with Rosser's men, the latter accompanied the chronicler's unit to Pittsylvania Courthouse in company with a Colonel Smith of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry. Smith asked the troopers to follow him south to affect a junction with Gen. Joe Johnston or else escape to Mexico. The men agreed and preparations got underway to make the journey.

Meanwhile, Major General Lunsford Lomax fled Lynchburg with his cavalry division with the intention of joining Lee at Danville. En route south he made contact with elements of Rosser's command and heard for the first time that Lee had surrendered. The two officers hastened to Danville where they conferred with Confederate Secretary of War, John C. Breckenridge. The Secretary was apparently in no position to offer any solutions and headed for Greensboro to overtake President Davis.

Lomax sized up the situation and ordered his artillery units to stack their guns at Pittsylvania Courthouse. The site in Chatham where they stacked the weapons is another mystery. Obviously, Rosser followed suit at Chatham and stacked his eight peices alongside those deposited by Lomax's artillery officer, Colonel William Nelson.

General Beauregard was by now in Greensboro and, aware of the threat posed by the approach of Union General Stoneman from the west, he ordered Lomax to stay and defend Danville. By April 15th, it was obvious that a Stoneman raid on Danville was unlikely.

Meanwhile, Rosser was apparently on his own and on April 12th passed through Chatham and headed north to his ultimate capture near Staunton a month later.

D. M. Grabill, the chronicler, next divulged details of a very interesting incident. He reported that a detail consisting of himself, Milson Hotel, and another trooper of Company F was formed to burn Pannill's Bridge across the Staunton River near the village of Long Island. He relates the following:

*"We set out to obey these orders, which we did not understand, as General Lee had surrendered and we thought it unnecessary to further destroy property. But it is not a soldier's part to question his superiors; so we started, rather reluctantly, to carry out the last orders received from a Confederate officer. About one o'clock the next day we reached the bridge we were supposed to burn and set about preparing to do so. We met a lot of soldiers on the way, and squad after squad inquired what we were going to do, and upon learning our orders, they would ask that we delay a little longer, as there was another squad just a little way back. This occurred time after time, and we delayed till it was about sunset, when a Captain from Rosser's Brigade rode up and asked why we had not burned the bridge. We explained to him, but he said 'Burn it at once,' and just as the sun was sinking in the west we applied the torch. It made a great fire, and many were the*

*soldiers who came that way and found their progress blocked by the river.*

*“When we got back to Pittsylvania about sundown next day, we learned that our brigade had left and that neither direction nor destination was known. We then decided to go to our homes, and next morning found us on our way to the Shenandoah Valley, already so famous as the great battlefield of Stonewall Jackson —.*

*“While in Lynchburg in 1905, I learned from a son of George Miley, a native of the Staunton River section, that the bridge was not the public road bridge, but the private property of one Sam Pannill. That the other bridge was still standing and doing service. — So far as I know, that was the last bridge burned in Virginia during the war.”*

Grabill was unaware of the importance of Green Hill, the antebellum Pannill plantation on the Staunton River, near the present site of the community of Long Island. Samuel Pannill had a wealthy son-in-law, John Wimbush, whose tobacco plantation, The Promised Land, lay in Halifax County on the south side of the Staunton adjoining Pannill's land. The bridge that Grabill helped burn served as a connecting link between the two plantations.

By the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, Pannill had built an impressive estate at Green Hill that included a tobacco plantation, a grist and sawmill, a company store, a chapel, a commercial blacksmith shop, a fleet of bateaux, a ferry and later a toll bridge. He was elected President of the Roanoke Navigation Company and exerted tremendous influence on that institution during his tenure.

The destruction of the bridge has been a source of perplexity among Civil War buffs. Some tend to confuse Pannill's Bridge with Ward's Bridge on the Pittsylvania - Lynchburg Turnpike some twenty miles upstream near present-day Altavista.

Whereas Grabill's 1905 account contributes nothing toward determining the location of the deposit of the eight artillery pieces at Pittsylvania Courthouse, it verifies that Rosser and his command were indeed in Pittsylvania Courthouse shortly before his departure for Staunton. In all likelihood, Rosser and Lomax left their pieces with the Home Guard in what is now Chatham. Rosser's testimony that eight guns were there would have been enough to send the Yankees scurrying to Pittsylvania County to prevent their falling into the hands of other rebellious units. There is no mention of the presence of, or the disposition of, any military equipment in Pittsylvania County records during this period. Unless the National Archives in Washington or other sources yield further information on the incident, the final disposition of the pieces of artillery is lost in antiquity.

#### Resources:

Lawrence McFall, *Danville In The Civil War*, Second Edition, H. E. Howard, Inc., Lynchburg, VA 2001, pp. 100-101.

*The Bailey Collection*, Rare Books Section, Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

*Odds and Ends: A Newsletter of Eagle Byte Historic Research.*

Stewart Sifakis, *Who was Who in the Civil War*, Facts on File, 1988.

The account is from a letter from D. M. Grabill, a resident of Tom's Brook, Shenandoah County, Virginia. The original letter was published in Vol. 32 of the *Confederate Veteran Magazine*. It is on the Internet at <http://www.halifax.com/county/burned.htm>

## Genealogy Query

I am looking for information on Isaac Luden White b. circa 1803 Rockingham/Shenandoah Co., d. 6/15/1860 Pittsylvania Co. VA. He married Mary Catherine Adams b. circa 1813 Shenandoah Co., d. 5/4/1890 in Pittsylvania Co. VA. I have heard that the parents of Isaac Luden White were Andrew White and Lucinda Graham from the Shenandoah area of Virginia but I know nothing more. It would seem that Isaac Luden White had brothers and sisters.

Isaac Luden White and Mary Catherine Adams had the following children:

- 1) George Williams White b. 5/4/1839 (m. Louisa Abigail Eanes) d. 3/19/1910
- 2) Mary Amanda White b. 4/29/1841 (m. George Spruce) d. 12/13/1906
- 3) Christian Adams White b. 3/1843 (m. Virginia Alice Hoover) d. 7/29/1914
- 4) Naason B. White b. circa 1845 d. 6/30/1862
- 5) Benjamin Stuart White (more on him later)
- 6) Alphus Adolphus White b. 1/18/1849 (m. Nancy Jennings Collie) d. 7/30/1882
- 7) Eleanor Virginia White b. 4/9/1851 (m. John T. Gatewood) d. 3/17/1916
- 8) Annie Mariah White b. 1855 (m. Edward Archer Shelton) d. 6/19/1950
- 9) Rebecca M. White b. 4/9/1851 (m. James E. Gatewood) d. 12/31/1911
- 10) Isaac Lindow/Ludlow White b. 1/16/1860 (m. Mary Ellis Farthing) d. 12/17/1925

Benjamin Stuart White and Sarah John Collie are my husband's line. Benjamin Stuart White was b. 6/10/1847, d. 9/1/1921. Sarah John Collie b. 4/20/1858, d. 2/14/1918. (Sarah's parents were Carter Collie and Giddy Hall.)

The children of Sarah John Collie and Benjamin Stuart White were (plus four babies who are buried next to them in the Chatham Cemetery):

- 1) Carolyn White b. 6/10/1879 (m. Walter Fitzpatrick) d. 2/16/1963
- 2) Benjamin Christian White b. 7/22/1881 (m. Nora Shields) d. ?
- 3) Lysander (Sandy) Irvine White b. 10/25/1885 (m. Ursey Pearle Burr) d. 11/6/1954
- 4) Jesse Spruce White b. 2/26/1887 (m. Irene Walton) d. 11/1943
- 5) Johnnie Katherine White b. 6/10/1890 (m. Mayo Tabb) d. 1/2/1968
- 6) Ruth White b. 4/25/1892 (m. Richard Henry Moore) d. 3/7/1960
- 7) William Wilson White b. 2/22/1894 (m. ?) d. 5/8/1954
- 8) John Cecil White b. 5/1/1990 (m. Mattie Lucile Bass) d. 12/31/1937

I would love to hear from descendants of all these White and Collie lines with information, old photographs and stories, especially really old photographs.

Also, are the Rawley or Tarpley White family of Pittsylvania Co. related to this White family at all?

Lynne White  
17698 Healdsburg Ave  
Healdsburg, CA, 95448  
707-695-0017 or 707-431-1620  
znothing@aol.com

## Architectural Query



We are seeking historical information and old photos of our home, which is located at 1725 Orphanage Road (formerly known as Lima Road) in Pittsylvania County, 1.5 miles from the Franklin Turnpike.

We think that the house was built around 1875 for Thomas and Emily Poindexter. It was later owned by Thomas J. and Josie P. Wood from 1890 - 1919. Both families are buried in a cemetery near the home. We are also trying to determine by what name (if any) this house was known.

If there are any descendants of either family (or other individuals) with knowledge, information, or stories to share, or an interest in joining the search, we would be grateful.

Tim and Nancy Carpenter  
1725 Orphanage Rd.  
Danville, VA 24540  
434-836-3482  
[nancy-tim@mindspring.com](mailto:nancy-tim@mindspring.com)

## **Deadline for Submissions**

Please submit any announcements, articles, etc. for the next issue of *The Pittsylvania Packet* by June 15th, 2004. Queries and letters from our readers are always welcome!

## **New System for PHS Book Orders**

In order to expedite orders for books offered by the Pittsylvania Historical Society, the Board has implemented a plan by which the Society's books will be offered by several retail booksellers. No longer will the Society accept and process the orders directly.

The Historical Society books are currently available for purchase from the following retailers:

Chatham Books  
10 North Main Street  
P. O. Box 71  
Chatham, Virginia 24531  
434-432-2488  
[chathambooks@gamewood.net](mailto:chathambooks@gamewood.net)

Mitchell Publications  
P. O. Box 429  
Chatham, Virginia 24531  
434-432-0595  
<http://www.MitchellsPublications.com>  
[answers@foodhistory.com](mailto:answers@foodhistory.com)

Shadetree Rare Books  
P. O. Box 994  
Chatham Antique Gallery  
Chatham, Virginia 24531  
434-432-1400  
<http://www.ShadetreeRareBooks.com>  
[hhurt@adelphia.net](mailto:hhurt@adelphia.net)

Following is the list of Historical Society books currently in print. Suggested retail prices do not include shipping, handling, or tax.

Maud Carter Clement, *History of Pittsylvania County* (Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$22.

Madelene Fitzgerald, *Pittsylvania Homes and History of the Past* (Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$18.

Roger Dodson, *Footprints from the Old Survey Books* (Softcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$11.

Madelene Fitzgerald and Frances Hallam Hurt, *18th Century Landmarks of Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Softcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$11.

Gray's *Map of Chatham, Virginia 1878* (Frameable Map) Suggested Retail Price: \$3.

Frances Hallam Hurt, *An Intimate History of the American Revolution in Pittsylvania County, Virginia* (Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$15.

Herman Melton, *Pittsylvania County's Historic Courthouse: The Story Behind Ex Parte Virginia and the Making of a National Landmark* (Softcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$11.

Herman Melton, *Thirty-Nine Lashes Well Laid On: Crime and Punishment in Southside Virginia 1750—1950* (Hardcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$22.

Judge Langhorne Jones, *Tales from a Small Town* (Softcover) Suggested Retail Price: \$5.